Adding Value to Accommodations Decision-making

The South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) won an Enhanced Assessment Grant in 2006 for the Adding Value to Accommodations Decision-making for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities (AVAD) project. Our goal is to ensure the valid, effective use of accommodations designed to increase access to large-scale assessments for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Objectives of the project are to 1) validate and enhance the Selection Taxonomy for English Language Learner Accommodations (STELLA) and publish it on the SDE's Web site; 2) create and validate a decision-making taxonomy for the Accommodation Station (AS) based on the ASES Accommodations Manual and publish it on the SDE's Web site; 3) develop 20 prototypes of CAE science items for grade four; and 4) disseminate results through reports, the SDE's Web site, User and Technical manuals, the ASES Professional Development Guide video, and Web-Ex teleconferences.

The AVAD project addresses all four absolute priorities and all three competitive preferences. AVAD involves the collaboration of 38 states in two groups—the Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) SCASS and the Assessing Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) SCASS. Consultants from Michigan State University and the University of Oregon will also collaborate on the AVAD project. Through AVAD, we will validate and enhance the accommodations decision-making tools developed by the Taxonomy for Testing English Language Learners (TTELL) and the Achieving Accurate Results for Diverse Learners (AARDL) projects. The SDE has submitted its State Consolidated Plan to the U.S. Department of Education. In our plan, we include Section 6112, Enhanced Assessment Instruments, as a program in our consolidated strategy.

The STELLA and the AS facilitate rigorous, systematic, and empirically based accommodations decision-making so that ELLs and students with disabilities receive the accommodations that best allow them to demonstrate what they know and can do. By enhancing and publishing these systems, the AVAD project will contribute significantly to the growing body of research about inclusive assessment strategies that yield accurate results for all students.